

Indiana Legal Services, Inc

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Informal Adjustment

What is an Informal Adjustment?

This is a way to handle a case involving a neglected or abused child without actually filing a Child In Need of Services (CHINS) case. The county can choose to do an Informal Adjustment if there is probable cause to believe the child has been abused or neglected.

An Informal Adjustment is a written agreement between the county Office of Family and Children, an abused or neglected child, and the child's parents. The agreement states what things the parents must do to keep their child safe. It may include family counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, etc.

What if I don't want an Informal Adjustment?

The child and the child's parents must agree to the Informal Adjustment before it can be done. If you not agree, you can tell the county you do not want an Informal Adjustment. The county will probably then file a CHINS case in court. If the court decides your child is a CHINS, you will probably end up doing the things the county Office of Family and Children wanted you to do.

Some parents prefer an Informal Adjustment instead of a full CHINS case. However, both a CHINS case and an Informal Adjustment will be reported to the child abuse registry.

Do we have to get court approval for an Informal Adjustment?

Yes. The court must approve the agreement, and will also monitor the term of the agreement. The Office of Family and Children will file regular progress reports with the court saying whether or not the family is complying with the Informal Adjustment agreement.

How long will an Informal Adjustment last?

The Informal Adjustment can generally last for up to six months, although the court can approve another six-month term, making the Informal Adjustment last for one year.

Are there alternatives to Informal Adjustment, which do not need court approval?

Yes. The parents could voluntarily agree to a Service Referral Agreement (SRA) that does not require judicial approval or monitoring. By accepting an SRA, the parents of an abused or neglected child agree to complete recommended services designed to improve their parenting abilities.

What happens if the parents do not comply with the requirements of a Service Referral Agreement or an Informal Adjustment?

The county Office of Family and Children can file a CHINS petition in Juvenile Court if the parents do not follow the SRA or the informal adjustment.

The parents can also be found in contempt of court if the parents do not follow the Informal Adjustment.

Do I have to pay for an Informal Adjustment?

The court can order the parent to pay a monthly fee between \$5 and \$15.

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